



# KATHERINE J. TRIMNAL RESEARCH AUTHOR / PHOTOGRAPHER

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## Terrible times following Hugo proved to be state's finest hour

*The STATE 9/21/94*

By KATHERINE J. TRIMNAL

Hurricane Hugo was the most significant weather event in the history of South Carolina. Sustained winds of 135 mph in Charleston and wind gusts of 157 mph in Sumter made it the strongest storm to strike the United States in 20 years. The concentrated power of Hugo was so intense that during its 13-day lifespan, it dominated, controlled and selectively destroyed every shore, structure and tree in its path. At the time of its landfall on Sullivan's Island just before midnight on Sept. 21, 1989, the heat-generated storm machine completely covered South Carolina, Georgia and most of North Carolina.

Hurricane Hugo qualified as a Category 5 storm — the highest — on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale. Just south of McClellanville, a coastal village that lost 75 percent of its fishing fleet, Bull's Bay recorded the highest storm surge ever measured on the Eastern Seaboard — 20.2 feet. Incredibly, only 49 fatalities were directly related to Hurricane Hugo in the United States, the Caribbean and Leeward Islands; thousands were injured and left homeless.



Trimnal

Once the storm passed, we focused on the enormous task of rebuilding our state and healing families. The rebuilding was finished in record time, but emotional and psychological recovery from a storm as violent as Hugo takes longer, and some individuals never recover. The eerie green sky, the deafening sound of relentless roaring wind, the incredible sight of water lifting up houses and crashing them into each other, the sickening stench of dead fish and animals, the absence of birds on the seashore, the loss of precious family photos and heirlooms to a churning sea — are all parts of an endless nightmare.

We learned that disaster pulls us together. In the aftermath of the storm, thousands of families were left homeless and bewildered. People from all parts of the country came to South Carolina to clear roads, to remove trees that crashed on homes that survived, to rebuild houses that had shattered or disappeared, to restore hope and order in peoples' lives. They came to help.

With chain saws, crowbars, hammers and buckets of nails, they traveled by buses, pickups and vans, forming caravans as they met and bonded together on their journey. Caring people across America sent or brought truckloads of bottled water, canned drinks, food, medical supplies, blankets, mattresses, toilet paper and diapers. They brought ladders, lumber and roofing shingles.

Construction workers, carpenters and home builders who were out of work elsewhere found jobs waiting, work guaranteed for six months to two years. A national work force suddenly saw Mecca and salvation in a state that lay in ruins. When Hurricane Hugo ravaged 23 counties — literally half the state — and wiped out highways and towns at a cost of \$7 billion, all roads across the country suddenly led east.

During the rebuilding and recovery phase, we witnessed the true charity of mankind: gifts of time, resources and compassion to those in need. Following Hugo, people helped neighbors and strangers alike without questioning their race, creed, sexual preference or political beliefs. The aftermath gave a refreshing insight into the best mankind can be.

As we approach the beginning of a new century — and millennium — we should celebrate the miracles and remember the lessons Hugo taught us. In many ways, it was South Carolina's finest hour. If we focus our energies and resources on vital issues in our state government — such as effective and appropriate legislation to prevent adolescent violence and juvenile crime — and sensibly avoid costly distractions — such as the time-consuming stonewalling over removing the Confederate battle flag — we can accomplish a great deal. Indeed, we can move mountains as we did with Hurricane Hugo.

*Ms. Trimnal is an author and photographer who lives in Columbia.*

### "Photographer's Notebook: Hurricane Hugo"

Send Book Orders To: K.J. Trimnal Photography  
506 Sunset Drive  
Columbia, S.C. 29203  
(803) 765-0006 early a.m.

PREPAID: \$9.95 per book plus \$2.50 postage and handling  
-Quantity Purchases Available-

*The Columbia writer is a member of the South Carolina attorney general's Task Force on crime and violence. She is an author and a photographer whose book, "Photographer's Notebook: Hurricane Hugo," remain available at \$9.95 each plus \$2.50 postage and handling from the author, 506 Sunset Drive, Columbia 29203.*

*Email: ktrimnal@aol.com*

**Member, South Carolina Attorney General's TASK FORCE ON CRIME & VIOLENCE**



EVENT

Richland Library Main

# Remembering Hurricane Hugo

Saturday, September 21, 2019

3 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.



On the thirtieth anniversary of making landfall, hear stories about the historic hurricane from trusted meteorologist Jim Gandy.

Former Broadcast Chief Meteorologist Jim Gandy shares his experiences tracking Hurricane Hugo on the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the hurricane making landfall in South Carolina. Hear how he predicted the historic hurricane and his thoughts about future hurricane seasons. Q&A to follow.



ADD TO MY CALENDAR

## Event Type(s)

Community Awareness

## Audience(s)

Adults

School age children (6-12 years)

Teens (12-18 years)

[Free E-Book](#) about “*HURRICANE HUGO*” (September 21-22, 1989) – 52 pages, pdf - on the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

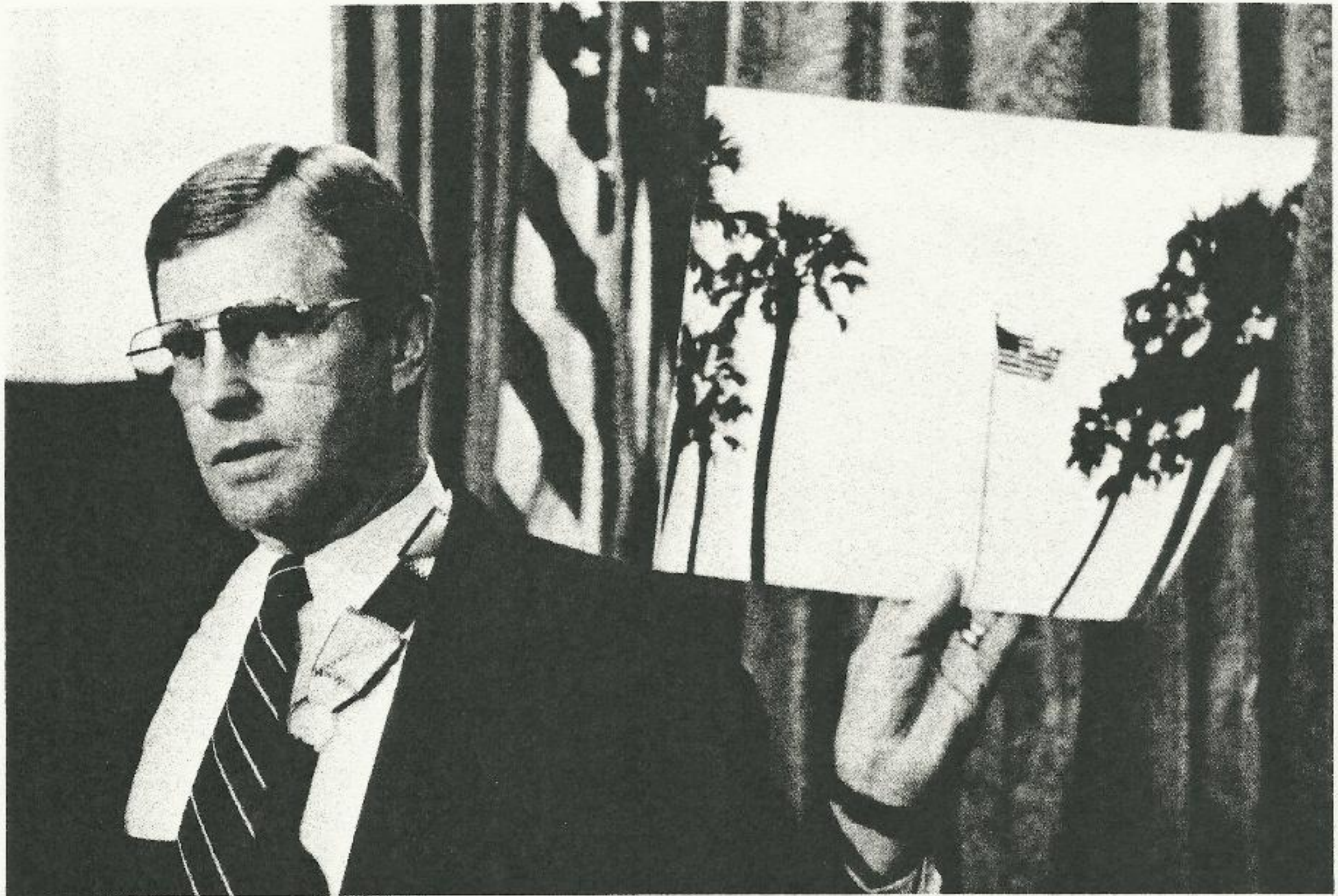
“*Photographer’s Notebook: Hurricane Hugo, September 21-22, 1989*” c 1990 - Katherine J. Trimnal, Author/Photographer

Send an [email request](#) for the link to this free historic e-book to: [ktrimnal02@aol.com](mailto:ktrimnal02@aol.com)



# **"SPIRIT OF SOUTH CAROLINA"**

## **Hurricane Hugo Flag Photo Now Available**



S.C. Governor Carroll Campbell shows **"Spirit of South Carolina"** flag photo by Columbia photographer Katherine J. Trimnal at a newsconference.

**The State** newspaper - - March 22, 1990

"Governor Carroll Campbell opens a newsconference Wednesday (March 21, 1990) in Columbia, S.C., showing a photograph of a tattered U.S. Flag and Palmetto Trees that survived the brunt force of Hurricane Hugo at Folly Beach near midnight, September 21, 1989 . . ."

The flag photo (by Columbia photographer Katherine J. Trimnal) illustrates the **spirit** of the recovery efforts on the coast six months after Hurricane Hugo made landfall in Charleston.

Color 11"x 14" Photo prints **now available** from **K.J. Trimnal photography** exclusively.

**"The Spirit of South Carolina"** is a historical photograph of the most significant weather event in South Carolina history, Hurricane Hugo - - September 21-22, 1989.

Order information for the **"Spirit of South Carolina"** flag photograph - Old Glory and Palmetto Trees -  
©1990, Katherine J. Trimnal, Hurricane Hugo Photo Collection

Color 11"x14" prints (unframed) of **"The Spirit of South Carolina"**

Prepaid: \$45.00 each plus \$4.50 shipping costs

-Quantity Purchases Available-

**Send Photo Orders To: K.J. Trimnal Photography**  
**506 Sunset Drive**  
**Columbia, S.C. 29203**

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